



# Overcoming Challenges during COVID-19 Times

As an employee-owned company, the Urschel team overcame many challenges created in the marketplace as COVID-19 besieged the food processing industry and the world. Slated as an essential business by the U.S. government, Urschel remained fully open and operational.

**By Expert Mike Jacko, vice president of Applications & New Product Innovation at Urschel**

**C**COVID-19 safeguards were swiftly put into place including social distancing, wearing of masks, and shifting some employees to work from home. Other measures included installing non-contact doors activated to open when a person waves over the light sensor and increased routine cleaning of all commonly touched surface areas. Management developed and implemented a comprehensive, multi-pronged plan to keep employees safe and maintain strong operations. Early on, the Procurement Department strengthened and deepened the supply chain ordering as much raw material from as many sources as possible. As an OEM (original equipment manufacturer), the bulk of all critical Urschel machine

parts are created onsite. Urschel ramped up manufacturing to increase the multi-million-dollar inventory stock the company keeps on hand. The components housed on the shelves were reviewed and alternate parts added in case substitutions needed to be made over time. It was a true test for the entire company as key departments worked together and the customer service department continued to work closely with food processors around the globe. As restaurants closed, food processors supplying to the grocery stores relied on Urschel to keep their lines running optimally. Grocery in-store demand continued to climb. Urschel plant workers and customer service worked diligently to fill customer orders. Shipping delays did occur from time-to-time due to the increase of

retail-to-consumer volume stress placed on forwarders. Zoom software allowed Urschel to accomplish a series of international sales meetings. This offered idea exchanges, pertinent education related to recently released machinery, and valuable input and insight for the research and development teams. Urschel managed to adapt to the changing marketplace and strengthen customer relationships in the process. Through the company's manufacturing independence, parts are created from raw materials by the many skilled craftsmen. Being an employee-owned company, all workers have a keen interest in the ongoing success of the company. Quality of every part and machine is paramount.

## INNOVATIVE CUTTING TECHNOLOGY

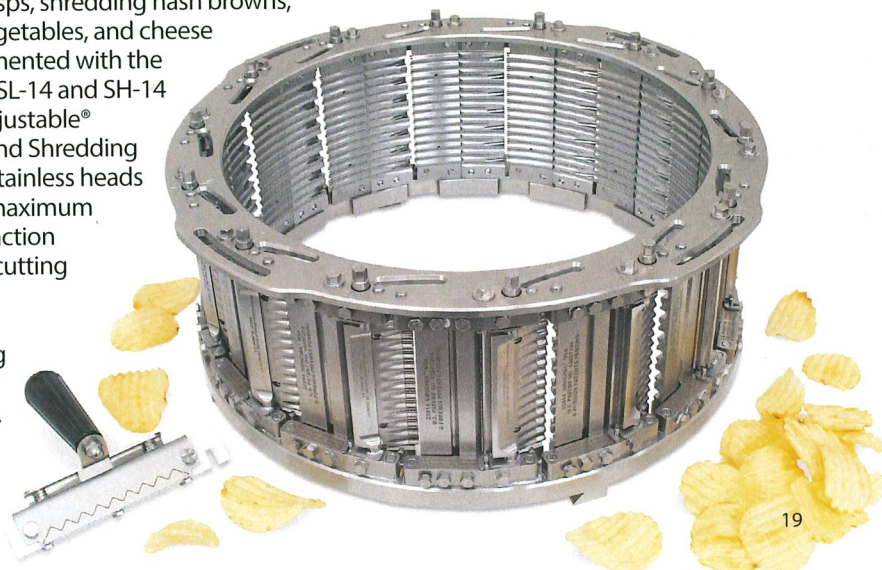
New advancements enabled Urschel to release five new machine models during the past year: the DiversaCut 2110A® Dicer with Discharge Conveyor, the TranSlicer® 2520 Cutter available in two models (standard and short frame), the Affinity® Integra-D Dicer (U.S.D.A., Dairy Division accepted cheese dicer), and the Affinity® CD-L Dicer. The focus of these models lies mostly outside of the potato industry. Nonetheless, the engineering advancements developed in the manufacturing will carry forward to subsequent machinery. Urschel has been fortunate to grow alongside the potato processing industry to continue to meet the needs of this constantly changing market. In the strip cutting/French fry/dicing area, many Urschel dicers are available depending on customer objectives. The DiversaCut® Line of dicers stands out. The DiversaCut 2110A® Dicer (DCA), by Urschel, is primarily the go-to machine for dices and crinkle french fries. The machine provides exacting cuts at high capacity. The DCA is manufactured for rugged production environments. Customers appreciate the long runtimes the machine delivers. Ease of use is another feature, noted by many processors. Handled, built-in circular knife carriage, removeable, slide-in slicing knife, and dial-in slicing contribute to a smooth flow of operation. Processors view this as a reliable, dependable machine that fits their production requirements. The DCA may be outfitted with either a 5 or 10 HP (3.7 or 7.5 kW) motor up to 90 hertz with supported heavy-duty components/gearing to obtain unsurpassed capacities. Most potato processors will not need to run at such high speeds/capacities because the rest of the line may not be able to keep up with the product coming off of the Urschel machine, but this option is available for some of our leading, 'super processors.' New to the DiversaCut line is the new DiversaCut 2110A with Conveyor Discharge. The new machine with added discharge may benefit batch processors. For efficiency in terms of price point, small-to-medium processors may

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benefit from the DiversaCut Sprint® or Sprint 2® Dicers. Both offer smart, compact cutting zones for optimal dices and strips as lower cost alternatives for processors with one-, two-, or three-dimensional cutting options, along with many of the same added benefit built-ins as the larger volume DiversaCut 2110A. Oftentimes, processing houses begin with smaller machines, such as one of these, to deliver volumes of precise cuts to their customers. As the processing house gains a positive reputation it either continues to build a number of small lines or upgrades to larger equipment via trade-in opportunities. The Model CC series remains the 'go-to' for slicing chips/crisps, shredding hash browns, other vegetables, and cheese complemented with the popular SL-14 and SH-14 MicroAdjustable® Slicing and Shredding Heads. Stainless heads deliver maximum cutting action with 14 cutting stations, almost doubling the capacity.

Special features include quick-change knives and improved thickness setting to maintain strict tolerances and offer longer knife life. In these times of COVID-19 when companies are running with minimal essential employees, these heads do not require expert experienced operators to get the perfect slices. The machine also offers slices for thicker potato products and thin julienne strips/sticks. The CC is viewed as an integral part of the potato chipping processing line. Processors prefer this slicer because of the precision slices that equate to even fry times to maximize profits. Both regional chippers and the bigger, global companies purchase this slicer for



# Expert View - Sharp Innovations in Potato Cutting



ease of use to efficiently process quality cuts with minimal maintenance. Related to other types of potato processing, elongated potatoes are commonly sliced by the ETranSlicer® Cutter for final or pre-cut product and all types of particle size reduction applications via the Comitrol® Processor line, including potato flake applications. The abundance of reduction heads and impellers, provided by the Comitrol, contributes to the success of many processors with the ability to reduce down to micro-dimensions. Customers appreciate ease of use and refined cutting principle.

## KNIVES: THE LARGEST SMALL PART

Performance. Function. Durability. These words usually refer to a capital purchase, an investment. With customers demanding more in a design than ever before, knives play an important role. Customers are always looking to improve sanitation and time efficiencies. Cutting principles are more precise to produce tighter, increased in-spec results, dedicated to increasing usable product. Components are constructed with ease-of-use elements, such as built-in handles,

while also being able to withstand rugged production environments. Tools that accompany machines are also designed to expedite routine procedures. It all relates to time savings and cost savings, but what about the proper knife choice to fit the proper cutting application? Urschel engineers thousands of knives. Choosing the correct knife is crucial in precision cutting. The correct knife and monitoring changeovers could lead to reduced starch loss, increased usable product, and consistent fry times. One of the smallest parts on the machine could make the largest impact over time. Urschel dedicates valuable resources to establishing appropriate knife edges. Knives are manufactured to conform to rigorous quality standards through proprietary means.

## CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Cutting efficiencies, yields and cost per pound of product is what processors are looking to improve as well as product quality, sanitary aspects, the manpower and technical expertise required to run the processes and machines for cutting. Sometimes additional auxiliary sizing equipment, defect removal equipment is required to go with the

slicer, French fry cutters, and dicers, so that's a potential added cost. More complicated machines may require higher paid workers, but the trend is to make things easier to set-up and run with lower labor costs. It's all a trade-off. A brand-new machine with worn out knives damaged by rocks will not make a good product. Feeding methods, when to change out parts, gauging cut quality versus getting the highest volume of useable product are all challenges processors must work to overcome. Customers are looking for a machine with components that work with their fast-paced line. Small and large companies, regional and global, want a robust machine that will hold precision slice tolerances throughout production runs with guarantees of parts and service when they need them. The ability to make changes 'on the fly' to be responsive to the needs of their environment. Customers look for responsiveness from vendors. Service or support contracts with vendors, such as Urschel, may result in overcoming hurdles related to manpower and technical expertise. Support over-the-phone and via video technology also offer valuable assistance. 'Ready-to-ship' parts for quick turnaround is also advantageous. Procedures for swapping out parts should be easily understood with simple steps to follow succinctly. During this COVID-19 time, exploring new technology may be difficult due to travel restrictions. In person cutting tests may not be practical. Live test cutting appointments via 'ZOOM' and other avenues are growing in popularity. Videotaping or photos of cut products and machinery are also readily available to assess abilities. •

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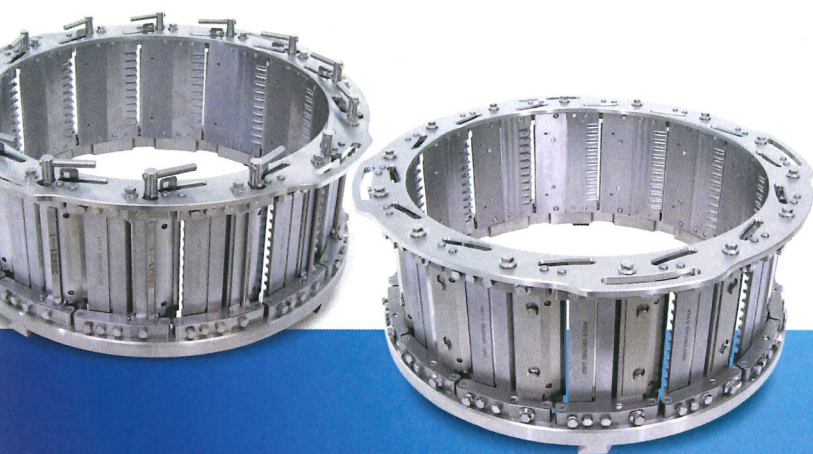


# Advanced Smarter Slicing Solutions

Successful processors work smarter by choosing advanced slicing solutions found in the MicroAdjustable® SL-14 Cutting Head.

Available with and without quick-clamping technology, the SL-14 readily replaces the Model CC standard 8-station head offering 14 stations for nearly double the capacity.

 View videos and learn more at [www.urschel.com](http://www.urschel.com).



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[www.urschel.com](http://www.urschel.com)

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